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UNCLAS KATHMANDU 001926

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SA/INS, LONDON FOR POL/GURNEY, NSC FOR MILLARD

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SUBJECT: NEPAL: MAOISTS ONLY PARTIALLY HONOR PLEDGE TO
CEASE-FIRE DURING DASAIN HOLIDAY

REF: (A) KATHMANDU 1888

(B) KATHAMNDU 1836

1. SUMMARY. MAOISTS ONLY PARTIALLY HONORED THEIR PLEDGE TO "SUSPEND ALL OFFENSIVE ACTIONS" DURING THE OCTOBER 2 - 10 DASAIN HOLIDAY. REPORTS INDICATE THAT MAOISTS INTENTIONALLY TARGETED INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS IN SEVERAL LOCATIONS, WHILE CLASHES WITH SECURITY FORCES CONTINUED, ALBEIT SOMEWHAT ABATED. A MILITARY SPOKESPERSON ON OCTOBER 1 OPINED THAT THE MAOISTS' UNILATERAL CEASE-FIRE WAS DUE TO WEAKNESSES WITHIN THE MOVEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. ON SEPTEMBER 26, A PRESS STATEMENT SIGNED BY MAOIST LEADER PUSHPA KAMAL DAHAL, ALIAS PRACHANDA, DECLARED THAT THE INSURGENTS WOULD "SUSPEND ALL OFFENSIVE ACTIONS" DURING THE NATIONAL DASAIN HOLIDAY FROM OCTOBER 2-10 (REF A). DESPITE THIS PLEDGE, ON OCTOBER 2, MAOISTS IN NAWALPARASI DISTRICT IN THE CENTRAL TERAI (SOUTHERN BELT), EXPLODED PRESSURE COOKER BOMBS IN TWO VACANT POLICE POSTS. LIKEWISE, INSURGENTS IN DADELDHURA DISTRICT IN FAR-WESTERN NEPAL DESTROYED A TELECOMMUNICATIONS REPEATER STATION THAT HAD RECENTLY BEEN RESTORED AFTER A PREVIOUS MAOIST ATTACK. ON OCTOBER 5, INSURGENTS IN TAPLEJUNG DISTRICT IN FAR-EASTERN NEPAL DESTROYED A SUSPENSION BRIDGE, ISOLATING TWELVE VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (VDC) AREAS.

3. IN ADDITION TO THE ATTACKS ON NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE, SECURITY FORCES AND MAOISTS HAVE CLASHED IN SEVERAL DISTRICTS. ON OCTOBER 2, ONE SUSPECTED MAOIST WAS KILLED IN A CLASH IN DOLAKHA DISTRICT IN CENTRAL NEPAL AFTER SECURITY FORCES HAD ENTERED AN AREA TO RETRIEVE THE BODY OF A DEAD ROYAL NEPAL ARMY (RNA) SOLDIER. ON OCTOBER 4, SECURITY FORCES REPORTEDLY KILLED SIX MAOISTS IN VARIOUS CLASHES IN FIVE DISTRICTS IN THE MID- AND FAR-WEST REGIONS OF NEPAL. SIMILARLY, ON OCTOBER 6, MAOISTS AND SECURITY FORCES CLASHED IN RAUTAHAT DISTRICT IN THE CENTRAL TERAI, RESULTING IN THE DEATH OF TWO INSURGENTS.

4. ON OCTOBER 1, COLONEL DEEPAK GURUNG, RNA SPOKESPERSON, ATTRIBUTED THE MAOIST ANNOUNCEMENT OF A CEASE-FIRE TO THEIR LOSS OF STRENGTH. "THE ARMY HAS MADE MANY GAINS WHILE THE REBELS HAVE FACED HEAVY CASUALTIES," HE CLAIMED. GURUNG ALSO ASSERTED THAT THE MAOISTS WERE FALTERING DUE TO LACK OF ARMS, POOR TRAINING AND LOW MORALE. DESPITE THE MAOISTS' UNILATERAL CEASE-FIRE, SECURITY FORCES HAVE REMAINED ON HIGH-ALERT WITH NO LEAVE GRANTED TO SECURITY PERSONNEL DURING THE DASAIN HOLIDAY.

5. COMMENT. THE MAOISTS' PARTIAL CEASE-FIRE HAS REDUCED THE NUMBER AND SEVERITY OF VIOLENT INCIDENTS IN NEPAL SO FAR DURING DASAIN, THE COUNTRY'S MOST SIGNIFICANT RELIGIOUS HOLIDAY. THE RNA'S ASSERTION THAT THE 9-DAY CEASE-FIRE DEMONSTRATES MAOIST WEAKNESS REMAINS TO BE SUBSTANTIATED, HOWEVER. THE RNA ALSO CLAIMS THAT 300 MAOISTS, AND ONLY 29 RNA SOLDIERS, HAVE BEEN KILLED SINCE THE CEASE-FIRE'S COLLAPSE ON AUGUST 27. THIS CLAIMED MAOIST DEATH TOLL APPEARS SOMEWHAT INFLATED WHEN COMPARED TO PRESS REPORTS OF ROUGHLY 250 MAOIST DEATHS. AN ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATION IS THAT THE CEASE-FIRE WAS A MAOIST PLOY TO IMPROVE ITS FALTERING PUBLIC IMAGE. HOWEVER, DESPITE RNA VICTORIES AGAINST THE INSURGENTS, THE MAOIST THREAT CONTINUES TO BE KEENLY FELT BY THE AVERAGE NEPALI AS DEMONSTRATED BY THE NEAR TOTAL OBSERVANCE OF THE MAOISTS' NATION-WIDE SHUTDOWN, OR "BANDH," IN LATE SEPTEMBER (REF B). END COMMENT.

MALINOWSKI